BIRMINGHAM WORKHOUSE COMPETITION.

The voting in committee on the seven selected plans terminated thus:—Mr. Hemming (Birmingham), 17; Messrs. Drury and Bateman (Birmingham), 16; the rest no where. The greatest dissatisfaction prevails, and has caused a shower of letters on us, containing charges against various parties. Both the plans on which the question ultimately turned are by ex-members of the board, whose places are positively not yet filled up.

It remains to be seen if the Board will ratify the decision of the Committee without further investigation,—we hope not. The selected plans may, for aught we know, be the best submitted, but unquestionably the circumstances attending the selection are most disreputable.

The following is suggested by a correspondent as a course to be taken:—

1st. That a requisition, signed by all the competing architects, be addressed to the Board of Guardians, requesting them to appoint three architects of reputation, from a list to be submitted, with instructions

2nd. To examine and report upon the several designs for the proposed new workhouse.

3rd. To select three such designs as may best provide for the accommodation of 1,550 inmates,—having due regard to convenience of arrangement and classification; ready access between the various classes and their dining-hall and chapel; economy of labour in the working and household departments, supervision, ventilation, and drainage; ample, but not unnecessary extent of buildings; cheerfulness of aspect; sound, but not extravagant, construction, combined with a sufficiently ornate style consistent with the object of the buildings.

4th. To make especial remarks as to the respective merits or demerits of the three designs so selected.

5th. That the authors of the three so selected be requested to furnish such further explanations as the objections urged against their respective designs may render necessary.

6th. That the Board of Guardians, being in possession of such evidence, proceed to select such design as shall best fulfil the several conditions.

7th. That when the final selection shall have been made, the opinions of the three examining architects be printed, and the whole of the designs sent in competition be exhibited to the public.

ENCROACHMENT ON THE NEW-ROAD, ISLINGTON.

METROPOLITAN IMPROVEMENTS.

Whilst contemplating with satisfaction the progress of opening new lines of street, widening others, and removing obstructions, it may excite some surprise to have our attention called to a movement in the opposite direction, which demands the attention, if not the interference, of the public.

The most important thoroughfare along the north side of the metropolis is the New-road, and in proportion as its importance has increased from the vast extension of buildings beyond it, which has rendered it now more an internal street than an external road, so it has been gradually encroached upon, and is likely to become, in a few years, in its central portion, more like an ordinary street than the fine open avenue that it was originally. The fact is, that from the corner of Osnaburg-street to the top of the hill at Pentonville, the ground in front of the houses, originally appropriated as gardens or open courts, has, in numerous instances, been built upon, to form shops and places for business, close out to the foot-path, particularly between the first-mentioned point and the Hampstead-road; and a large group of shops has very recently been erected near the corner of Osnaburg-street. Thus, the view and free air are obstructed, and the openness which characterized this leading thoroughfare is becoming gradually extinguished. For many years past I had observed the increase of this evil, and lamented it as one that could not be remedied or prevented, conceiving that the parties had a right so to deal with their premises, and that the public view of the matter, if it ever occurred to them, was not for a moment weighed against the commercial or pecuniary advantages to be gained by this mode of occupying their frontage ground. Under these circumstances I was agreeably surprised to learn that these erections are actually *illegal*, and in contravention of a law specifically framed for the prevention of all such obstructions; it is, therefore, not a little astonishing that the law should not have been enforced, and that it should so long have remained inoperative.

The Act of the 7th Geo. IV., for the consolidation of the metropolitan roads, provides that no building shall be placed within 50 feet of the New-road, or within 40 feet of the City-road, on any new foundations; and gives summary power to remove any such buildings as nuisances; but the powers of this Act were transferred by the 10th Geo. IV., to the respective parishes on which the roads are situated; and the result shows how inefficient are such powers when so distributed, as compared with a central body of commissioners. Where private interests are involved, and legal proceedings are necessary to carry out a public object, it is hopeless to expect the interference of a parochial vestry, unless they can be urged forward by the force of public opinion, and this certainly is a case in which that potent lever might and ought to be employed. I hope, therefore that the powerful aid of The Builder will not be wanting on this occasion. Whilst so many thousands are being spent in widening and disencumbering our streets and thoroughfares, it would be a great reproach to allow one of the principal lines to be narrowed, and probably occasion hereafter a large outlay of public money to remedy an evil which the legislature had wisely provided against, but the proper authorities had foolishly and culpably neglected.

Viator.

SOCIETY OF ARTS.

On the 31st of January (Mr. W. Tooke, F.R.S., in the chair), a paper by Mr. A. Claudet was read, "On the Photographometer, for measuring the intensity of the chemical action of the rays of light on all photographic preparations, and for affording a means of comparing the sensitiveness of the same." The art of photography, observed the author, is founded on the property with which light is endowed, namely, that of producing a photographic effect when it strikes upon certain chemical compounds. The effect being in proportion to the intensity of the light during a given space of time, it is necessary, for the success of the operation, to be able to ascertain the exact power of the light at any particular moment; and the only means of so doing hitherto possessed by the photographer is the effect it produces on the eye. A few only of the rays which emanate from the sun are capable of producing on the chemically-prepared surface an effect which is the cause of the photographic picture; and if it were possible to admit into a room only the rays which are endowed with the power of affecting the photogenic preparation, the objects in the room would not be visible to the eye, as the room would appear to be plunged in darkness, while the objects in it would reflect some invisible rays which are capable of producing the photographic image. The property of absorption possessed by red, orange, yellow, and green glass being known to photographers, and the power of admitting through blue glass nearly all the photogenic rays which are not luminous, combined with the improvements which have taken place since the discovery of the art by Daguerre, enable the photographist of the present time to employ a very soft light, and to place the sitter in the shade. As the result of the photographic operation depends on the intensity of the actinic rays, and also upon the degree of the sensitiveness of the chemical preparation, Mr. Claudet has constructed an apparatus which is not only capable of measuring the photogenic light, but of testing the sensitiveness of the chemical preparation of the Daguerrotype plate. This instrument is constructed so that a plate being placed upon an inclined plane will always fall with the same rapidity for each operation. The plate has seven vertical slits or openings cut in it; these are placed parallel to each other,—the first being 1 millometre wide, the second 2 millometres, the third 4, the fourth 8, the fifth 16, the sixth 32, and the seventh 64 millometres. The photographic surface is placed at nearly the bottom of the inclined plane, under a metallic plate pierced with seven circular holes corresponding with the openings of the moveable plate containing the proportionate apertures. When the moveable plate passes before the photogenic surface covered with the seven circular holes, the light strikes upon the spaces left open by the circular holes in various intensities. The space lighted by the opening of 64 millometres will be affected by an intensity double that which is lighted by 32 millometres, quadruple that of the next under the opening of 16, and so on until the last opening, which, being only 1 millometre, will have received 64 times less light than the first; so that after the operation, seven round figures, or less, according to the intensity of light, are represented on the photographic plate. The photographer is thus enabled to ascertain how long it will be necessary to submit the plate to the action of the light on the camera, by the length of time required to develop the seven round figures.

DRAIN BRICKS AND THE DUTY.

An application for a new trial, in the case "The Attorney-General v. Walker," on the ground of misdirection on the part of the Chief Baron, having been made, wherein the question is, whether bricks marked "Drain," and exempted by 2nd & 3rd of Victoria, cap. 24, sect. 18, from duty, might be used in *bridges over drains?* the judges in the Court of Exchequer have given their opinion and pronounced for a new trial. Mr. Baron Rolfe thought that no bricks were exempt which were not immediately necessary for the drainage, and that it was not enough that the necessity for the works should arise collaterally from those authorised or required for the purpose of draining land. Necessary works must be taken to mean "physically necessary," and such as were reasonably used with reference to the physical necessity. If the bridges and parapets were not necessary to the drain, the bricks used ought to pay duty; and it did seem that these works, though convenient and desirable, did not fall within the exemption as physically necessary.—Mr. Baron Alderson said it was clear that these bridges did not assist the drainage; on the contrary, they might impede the water in times of flood, and it was difficult to see how such works could be necessary to the drain.—Mr. Baron Parke was of the same opinion.—Sir F. Pollock, Chief Baron, was sorry to differ from the rest of the Court. His opinion was, that bricks were exempt from duty which were used on works either legally or physically necessary for the purpose of drainage. "Necessary" meant "reasonably" necessary, in his view of the Act. If a large open drain were to be made, it would be legally necessary that it should be walled in for the protection of the public, or arched over, and the arch or wall would be essential to the drain. It was the wish of the Legislature to confine the exemption to *bonâ fide* works executed for drainage, and to exclude all which were merely collateral, and were not physically and legally necessary by reason of some legal obligations which entailed their construction on the architect in connection with the drainage. Here the works are executed under a public Act by commissioners. The object of the Act 2nd & 3rd Victoria was to encourage such works, and its provisions ought to receive a liberal construction; and he could not think that the Legislature meant to confine its operations to works which were merely physically necessary, and to exclude those which were legally necessary, but that it was to be extended to such works as bridges and parapets as well as to the mere watercourse of the drain under them.

Edinburgh School of Design.—The competition drawings, &c., at the school under charge of the Board of Manufactures, were exhibited on Friday week, in the galleries of the Royal Institution, and the prizes awarded by the Duke of Buccleuch. A marked improvement is said to have been displayed in the various branches of study.

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